District 11 should keep the blinders off in student publications

Some members of this community have deemed "inappropriate" a Palmer High School student newspaper article about the difficulties of being a gay or lesbian teen-ager. The Board of Directors for the Pikes Peak Human Relations Coalition finds such censure unjust and unsound. We find consideration by the District 11 School Board to restrict similar articles to be damaging to constitutional democracy and to education's greater good.

PEAK VOICES

We can all breathe a sigh of relief that School District 11 has passed its bond issue. But what kind of climate shall exist in the newly renovated buildings? Will it be an academic environment in which students are taught to disparage or repress any idea that takes them out of their comfort zone? Will it be an environment in which students are taught that it is OK to disregard the rights of certain minorities?

If that is the type of environment the community supports, it will have passed the bond issue for naught, for no well-kept facility or high-tech equipment will truly educate students if we fail to instill in them a love of knowledge, respect for the unknown or unfamiliar, and an appreciation for the diverse perspectives that populate this increasingly interdependent world.

F. MIKE MILES

Background: A graduate of Fountain High School and West Point, Miles earned a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley and a master's from Columbia University in New York. He and his wife, Karen, have two children: Nicholas, 5, and Madeleine, 3.

Experience: A former diplomat who served six years in Moscow and Poland, Miles teaches advanced government and economics at Fountain High School. He is vice chairman of the Pikes Peak Human Relations Coalition Board of Directors.

The controversy over the Palmer High School article, "Finding True Love," demonstrates that problems of diversity and tolerance do indeed exist. Many are proud of the outward harmony of this community, but ignore or are ignorant of the tensions. Colorado Springs may not show the most overt signs of prejudice, but the less overt is just as insidious. The more dramatic actions of discrimination are spawned in a climate where seemingly benign forms are allowed to exist. Intolerance starts by repressing information about the issues; hatred grows from denying that a group of people, like homosexuals, share in our constitutional democracy.

Democracy does come hard. If you believe in the Bill of Rights, then you must accept the freedom of expression for both Colorado for Family Values and the gay community. If you believe the concept of equal protection, you will understand that it is an enduring concept, and that it did not die with Martin Luther King.

A good education also does not come easy. Instead of running from the unknown, one should confront it, try to understand it. Likewise, teachers should not avoid controversial topics when those topics matter, when they are relevant to a child's education. Indeed, challenges to one's mindset — some cognitive dissonance — is healthy.

Opponents of homosexuality will say that a student is easily influenced during his or her middle and high school years, that society must somehow protect them against "inappropriate" ideas. Educators, however, must protect our students against ignorance and bigotry. It is precisely because a student's world view is being shaped that we have an obligation to teach him or her the nature of human rights, the hard-won lessons of the 14th Amendment, the importance of tolerance and of entertaining concepts that may be foreign to our own experience.

When debating controversial issues, students should be forced to argue the side they don't agree with — not in order to change their minds, but in order to teach them to consider other points of view. When students want to publish controversial articles like finding gay love, the school should print it and then publish well-argued letters to the editor that give a different point of view. Of course, not everything is off-limits to censorship and educators must use their judgment. But intellectual comfort is not a criterium for teaching kids things that will help them succeed in life.

The Human Relations Coalition Board is concerned about the district's current review of its policy on student publications. The board hopes that the District 11 will demonstrate true leadership and make an unequivocal statement supporting the rights of homosexuals to express their views.

For this is not only an issue for Palmer High School or District 11 — it is an issue for the entire community of Colorado Springs. We are not the hate city and it is time to "walk the talk."

Peak Voices is open to readers who have expertise or personal experience in an area of public policy. Articles should be limited to 600 words in length and can be sent to: Peak Voices, Gazette Telegraph, P.O. Box 1779, Colorado Springs, CO 80901.

GT 11/18/96

"Late Night With Conan O'Brien" repeat (11:37 p.m., NBC) • Actress Rita Wilson and private eye Charlie Parker are slated for "The Late Late Show With Tom Snyder" (12:07 a.m., CBS) • Ahmad Rashad interviews basketball player Shaquille O'Neal on "Later" (12:30 a.m., NBC).

By United Features Syndicate columnist Kirk Nicewonger.

USA	28	(5:37) World Wrestling Federation: Monday Night Raw (Live) (CC)	Movie: ★★½ "Turner & Hooch" (1989, Comedy) Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, Craig T. Nelson. A fastidious policeman is teamed with a slobbering canine. ∩ (CC)			Silk Stalkings "Dark Heart" (R) ∩ (CC)		Big Date	Major Dad "A Bird in the Hand" (CC)	C-Net Central ∩	Reel Wild Cinema (R) ∩
WGN	21	7th Heaven "See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil" (CC)	Savannah "Good Golly, Aunt Lottie" ∩ (CC)		News ∩ (CC)	Wiseguy "Call It Casaba" ∩		In the Heat of the Night "Accused" ∩ (CC)		Simon & Simon "Revolution Number Nine and a Half"	
DISN	58	Tale Spin (CC)	Ducktales (CC)	Chip 'n' Dale Rescue (CC)	Goof Troop (CC)	Movie: ★★★ "Vacationing With Mickey and Friends" (1984, Comedy) 'NR' (CC)		Prince and the Pauper (CC)	Totally Minnie (R) (CC)	Milestones for Mickey (R)	Avonlea ∩ (CC)
HBO	54	"Mighty Morph" (CC)	Making of Congo (CC)	Movie: ★★ "Dutch" (1991, Comedy) Ed O'Neill. A working stiff drives a snotty kid home for Thanksgiving. ∩ 'PG-13' (CC)		Movie: ★★½ "Star Trek Generations" (1994) Patrick Stewart. The Enterprise crew encounters a deranged scientist. (CC)				Star Trek: First Contact	Autopsy-Grave (CC)
HBO2	63	(5:30) Movie: ★★★½ "Forrest Gump" (1994) 'PG-13' (CC)				Movie: ★★ "Iron Eagle" (1986) Louis Gossett Jr. ∩ (CC)			Movie: ★★½ "The Professional" (1994) Jean Reno. (CC)		
HBO3		Movie: ★★★ "This Is My Life" (1992) ∩		Arliss (CC)		HighLife (CC)	Movie: "Brain Smasher... A Love Story" ∩		Movie: ★ "Die Laughing" (1980) Robby Benson. 'PG' (CC)		
MAX	55	(5:30) Movie: ★★½ "Enemy Mine" (1985, Science Fiction) Dennis Quaid. ∩ 'PG-13'		Movie: ★½ "Empire Records" (1995) Anthony LaPaglia. ∩ 'PG-13' (CC)			Movie: ★★½ "Something to Talk About" (1995, Comedy-Drama) Julia Roberts, Dennis Quaid, Robert Duvall. ∩ 'R' (CC)			Movie: ★★★ "Kiss of Death" (1995) ∩ 'R' (CC)	
SHO	56	Movie: ★★½ "Home for the Holidays" (1995, Comedy) Holly Hunter. ∩ 'PG-13' (CC)		(7:45) Bedtime (R) ∩		(8:15) Movie: ★★★ "Misery" (1990, Suspense) James Caan. A psychotic fan holds an injured novelist captive. ∩ 'R'			Compromising Situations (R)	(10:45) Movie: ★½ "Hellbound" (1993, Fantasy) Chuck Norris, Calvin Levels. ∩ 'R'	
TMC	57	(5:10) Movie: "Street Law"	(6:40) Movie: ★★★ "A Pyromaniac's Love Story" (1995) William Baldwin. ∩ 'PG' (CC)			(8:15) Movie: ★★★ "While You Were Sleeping" (1995, Comedy) Sandra Bullock, Bill Pullman. ∩ 'PG' (CC)			Movie: ★★★ "Jefferson in Paris" (1995, Drama) Nick Nolte. Romantic troubles arise for ambassador Thomas Jefferson. (CC)		

"Line" just barely escapes being a bomb because of its wacky casting choices (Jan-Michael Vincent and Corey Feldman). You gotta admire a film that has the audacity to hire Jan and Corey in one movie. (I'd love to see the insurance policy the filmmakers took out on their "talent.") But don't be persuaded to rent "Line" on the basis of Michael Madsen's name on the video box. He doesn't even show up until the movie's two-thirds over.

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